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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: IRAQI GOVERNMENT, CONSTITUTION, REFERENDUM, NATIONAL RECONCILIATION; BAGHDAD

SUMMARY: Discussion on the Constitution, Referendum, and National Reconciliation were the major editorial themes of the daily newspapers on October 13, 2005. END SUMMARY.

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SELECTED COMMENTARIES  
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[1A.](#) "This Morning"  
(Al-Sabah Al-Jadeed, independent, published this front-page editorial by Ismael Zayyer)

"Those who attempted to hinder the constitutional process will be sorry--they have tried, unsuccessfully, to hurt their rivals. Moreover, this `fabricated' opposition is nominally supported by Amr Musa at the expenses of Iraq and all Iraqis. This group [Sunnis] wants to stand against the Iraqi people by trying to reject the constitution but it seems that they do not know that the Iraqi people are carefully watching them; our people know that this group wants to destroy the whole of Iraq's political accomplishments.

"In addition, this group is responsible for every child and youth who may be killed or assassinated at the black hands of terrorism. Today, all of our citizens have the constitutional right to decide what they believe and we will never admit defeat and submit to Zargawi and the Saddamist criminals who have destroyed this country.

"Now, there is a dominant and positive spirit prevalent among political groups which will mend faults in the constitution in preparation for the upcoming election. We have a good chance for amendment and reform for the sake of all Iraqis."

[1B.](#) "Yes to the Constitution"  
(Al-Iraq Al-Jadeed, independent, published this front-page editorial by Sa'ad Al-Ka'bi)

"The first Iraqi permanent constitution will be put to vote so that the people will have their final say about this constitution which will determine the future of Iraq. Before this constitution, we had seven temporary constitutions all of which tyrannized Iraqis and were written according to the needs of rulers rather than the needs of the people.

"Today, those who call for and insist on unity and Arabism do not truly care about either unity or Arabism in Iraq. In fact, they want to draft the same tyrannical constitutions that were written in the past and are trying hard to hinder the democratic progress of the Iraqi people. The permanent constitution is important because it does not allow parasites to dominate people's decisions. Hence, we have to vote for the constitution so that we can stop those who want to make this country continue to suffer.

"If we say `Yes' to the constitution, we will be able to reply to the killers and those who support them and in this way, we can defend ourselves against dictatorship and its followers. Today, those who weep over the unity of Iraq were the first ones who violated the country's unity when they occupied and looted Kuwait. They are the first group that divided Iraq into sects and nationalities. Despite that, millions of poor Iraqis will definitely vote for the constitution to defeat years of sectarianism, dictatorship and hateful Ba'athism, which we will never allow to return to our permanent constitution."

[1C.](#) "National Consensus"  
(Al-Adala, affiliated with SCIRI led by Abdul Aziz Al-Hakim, published this page-three editorial by Dr. Ali Khalif)

"Yesterday was an historic day when Iraqi national groups agreed to make some amendments to the constitution, following the coming election [in December]. This has isolated terrorists and those who dream of a return of the dictatorship. In addition, this has revealed the real face of honest and patriotic Iraqis who want only good things for their country and its people.

"Yesterday was the beginning of the move forward toward national reconciliation and, as Sayyid Abdul Aziz Al-Hakim confirmed, the belief that the principles of national reconciliation will encourage us to support initiatives to unify all viewpoints and isolate terrorism. President Talabani said that Sunni Arabs no longer have any excuse to reject the constitution. I think all generations will remember this day because we are all waiting for the day when the Iraqi people say 'Yes' to the constitution. The following day, terrorist faces will feign sorrow (through media outlets) over: Iraqi unity, the country's future, and the distribution of wealth. However, the Iraqi people will reveal the masks hiding the names of those who have attempted to restore the Ba'athist regime.

"Yesterday's agreement between national and Islamic powers can be considered an essential move that shows constructive dialogue. Sunni Arabs could have adopted this type of dialogue long ago. On the other hand, Zargawi has mistakenly labeled himself a representative for Sunni Arabs. Yesterday confirmed that Sunni groups are serious about participating in the political process and the Sunnis have realized that boycotting the constitution and the elections is useless because the Iraqi people will never allow the dictatorship to come back to power. The Iraqi people will move forward and advance toward freedom and democracy to build a new country where all citizens live peacefully under an elected government and a permanent constitution."

#### **D. "The New Tyrannies"**

(Al-Ihtijah Al-Akhar, weekly, anti-coalition, affiliated with the [Sunni] Liberation and Reconciliation Bloc led by Mish'an Al-Jabouri)

"The TNA (Transitional National Assembly) was forced to cancel its decision to change the law governing the referendum following serious criticism from liberal parties and democratic parliamentary members, in addition to the U.N. and the U.S. It is possible to say that the tyrannical ruling powers, which influenced the TNA, have been forced to retract their attempt to alter the referendum law--we must refer to the expanding number of rejecters to the draft constitution. This expansion follows the insistence of the ruling powers in rejecting the demands of others and their failure to make realistic amendments to the draft constitution that would preserve Iraq's unity and restore its position in the Arab world.

"Due to this insistence by those powers, the word 'No' has taken on new meaning and proliferated putting the ruling powers in an awkward position, in addition to religious authorities who assured us they would never interfere in Iraqi's choices or determination to express their will regarding whether to support or reject the draft constitution. Because of this, legislative and executive authorities have been pushed to explain the referendum law...

"Following this disappointment, on behalf of the ruling powers, they announced that the TNA retracted its decision with some conditions; one of them was to transfer the IECI employees that are posted in the majority of Sunni provinces--as if they were insistent on trading employees for militias to manipulate the referendum result in these provinces."

#### **E. "Last Minute Chance"**

(Al-Dustoor, independent, no bias, published this front-page editorial by Basim Al-Sheikh)

"The leaders of political blocs and other factions have worked diligently to push the constitution process forward. They have demonstrated a high degree of flexibility and made concessions toward putting the country's interest above all else in order to succeed during the referendum process--without divisions or disagreements that would destroy the political process and take us back to the starting point. "On the other hand, some factions have educated people in an effort to get them to vote against the constitution because they have encountered roadblocks in achieving their demands. This has caused leaders of the political blocs to review their plans, after failing to change the amendment of the TAL in the TNA [to facilitate the constitution's passage], forcing them to confront dangerous challenges and offer some concessions to rejecters to make them feel included in the process.

"These rejecters have worked hard recently to cause the political process to fail, but now harmony has been achieved among all factions who have announced that they will stop

their campaign against the constitution and will begin supporting it. So will they succeed in changing the public opinion from rejection to acceptance in such a short period time?

"It seems difficult if it is not impossible, but this significant and dangerous experience has provided an invaluable lesson proved to all--that dialogue and the democratic means are capable of leveraging issues and that politicians can get whatever they need through this process; policy is considered a language of interests and there is no absolute winner nor loser, but rather it's a process of give and take."

KHALILZAD